

THE BAPTIST Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

Mississippian opening Gospel doors

KAMASUNDU, Sierra Leone (Special) — Centuries ago they crossed the Guinea border and settled in the Buya Romende chiefdom of Sierra Leone. No one is certain why they left Guinea. Many believe it was because of the historic Mali invasion of that area.

Others believe there may have been tribal wars that forced the exodus. Still others conclude that trade caused the energetic Banta Themne to push their tribe eastward.

Whatever the reason, the Banta Themne established themselves in the northern province of Sierra Leone, bringing with them their traditional African beliefs as well as their Islamic faith.

Today, 25,000-30,000 Banta Themne people live in the rural bush area of the West African nation of Sierra Leone. There are 159 villages. The Banta Themne have had little or no access to the Gospel and are considered to be an unreached World A people.

In 1997, a team formed with the goal of making sure the Banta Themne people had the chance of hearing the Gospel in their own language — Themne. Lori Funderburk, Southern Baptist missionary in Ivory Coast and a native of Cleveland, is the team leader/strategy coordinator for this unreached people group.

Until 2001, the rest of the members of the team lived in the United States. Although not employed by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, they covenanted together to bring the Gospel to the Banta Themne.

Mary Sanders, who works at Woodridge Church in Kingwood, Texas, and Donisa Page of Slidell, La., handle the advocacy and prayer networking for the Banta Themne people group team. In 2001, Donald S. Conteh of Freetown, Sierra Leone, joined the team. He handles the on-site work of the team.

In 1998, the team set out to enlist 3000 people to begin praying daily and specifically for the Banta Themne people. A prayer strategy called the "30-10-10 Prayer Plan" was adopted and the team began looking for 30 prayer leaders to head up the prayer network.

To date, the team has 24 prayer leaders in the network and over 2000 prayer warriors praying daily for the Banta Themne. With so many people

praying, the team was not surprised when exciting things began to happen among the Banta Themne.

Earlier last year, Conteh began forming a relationship with the Paramount Chief of the Banta Themne. Although there are many chiefs and sub-chiefs, there is only one Paramount Chief and he rules them all.

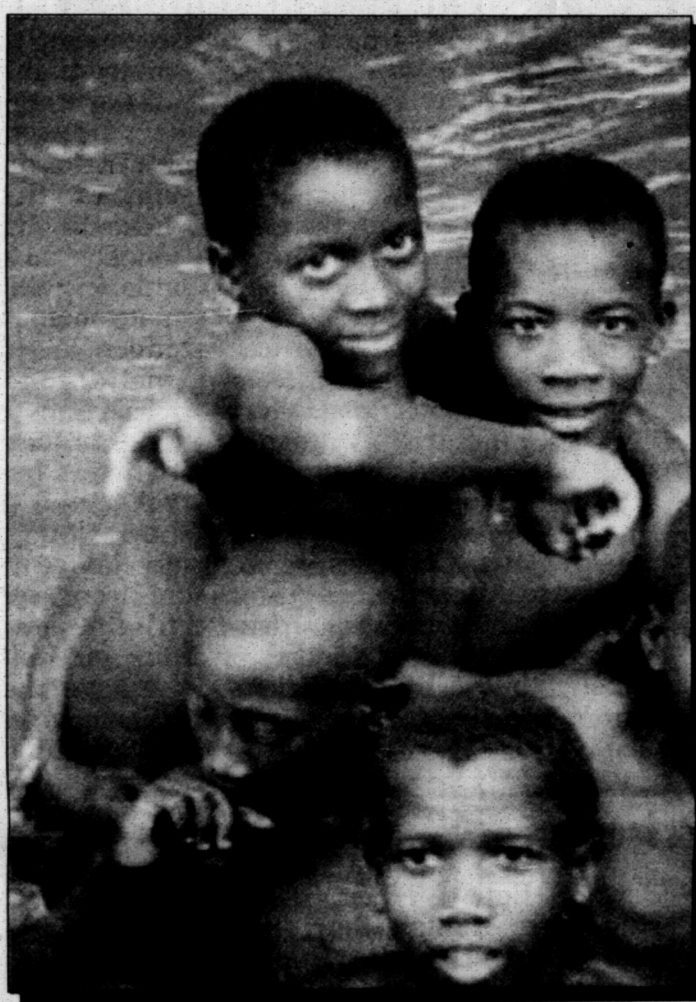
The Paramount Chief was living in Freetown at the time because ten years of civil war in Sierra Leone had driven him from his home in the village of Kamasundu. Because of the friendship that developed between them, Conteh was able to get the Paramount Chief's permission to visit the people, who were living in displacement camps around the Port Loko area at that time.

Conteh and Funderburk visited the camps, and relationships were established among the people.

By January 2002, the Banta Themne had returned to their villages in the Buya-Romende chiefdom, and the Paramount Chief had returned to Kamasundu.

Wanting to prepare the way for the work ahead, Funderburk, Conteh, and several others (including Mohamed Kamara, pastor of Tengbeh Town Church, Freetown) visited Kamasundu, met with the Paramount Chief and the elders of the village, and presented to them the idea of bringing Christianity to this chiefdom.

The team could not have realized how wide the door would swing open in order for the Gospel to come in. Not only did the Paramount Chief give them permission, but he alerted all of his sub-chiefs that they were to welcome the team with open arms when-



REACHING BANTA THEMNE — Southern Baptist missionaries, including Lori Funderburk of Cleveland, have encountered major successes in reaching the Banta Themne of Sierra Leone with the Gospel. The 159 villages of the Banta Themne are brimming with young people like these, eager to hear about Jesus Christ. (BR special photo)

ever they came to their villages with the Gospel.

Conteh visited Kamasundu again in March and called together anyone interested in Christianity to meet on that Sunday morning. Many attended the meeting that morning, including the Paramount Chief.

As a result of that meeting, Conteh led twelve people to the Lord. He encouraged them to meet together regularly, read the Bible, and pray.

When he returned at the end of the month, indeed the group had been meeting regularly every morning before going to farm and every evening after farming. They had also increased their number to over twenty people.

In May 2002, Funderburk and Conteh led a team of seven (including Pastor Kamara, two prayer warriors from Texas, representatives from the Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone, and another Great Commission Christian organization) on a prayer walk

through Kamasundu and several other Banta Themne villages nearby.

They also met with and encouraged the small church that was forming in Kamasundu. Evening devotions were held with crowds of over 100 each night for three nights.

God was certainly moving among this people. God was also moving in the heart of Pastor Kamara. He came back to Tengbeh Town Baptist Church with a burden and a vision for reaching the Banta Themne. During each service, he kept that burden and vision before his congregation.

They "adopted" the Banta Themne and made it their goal to participate where God was already at work! They committed to develop a master plan for reaching the Banta Themne and for mobilizing other churches and denominations to join with them.

On October 14, a delegation from Tengbeh Town Church with master plan in hand met with the leadership of Ebenezer Church of Lunsar to discuss networking together to reach the Banta Themne. There is also a National Presbyterian Church in Freetown that may begin networking with them soon.

In the last six months, people from surrounding villages have come to Kamasundu asking when someone will come and bring the Gospel to their villages. The fields are white with harvest, and it all began with just a handful of people who said, "We can make a difference! The Banta Themne are unreached, but they are not unreachable!"

A team was formed, a prayer network was developed, and God has been moving. Everyone is looking forward to seeing what amazing things God will do next in the lives of the Banta Themne.

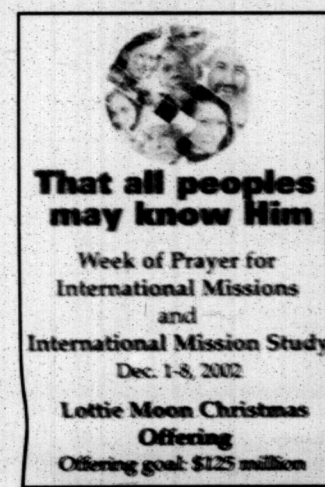
For more information about the Banta Themne people, www.byhisgrace.com/banta. To subscribe to the weekly prayer updates, email Donisa Page at bantathemne@hotmail.com, or write to Mary Sanders at P.O. Box 5593, Kingwood, TX 77325 5593. Free brochures and prayer cards to distribute among Sunday school classes, mission organizations, or other groups are also available.

SPECIAL EDITION

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WEEK OF PRAYER FOR
INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS
DECEMBER 1-8



Seeking God's passion is '02 offering theme

During the 2002 International Missions Emphasis, Dec. 1-8, Southern Baptists will focus on God's passion for every people group to know Him. This year's theme — That All Peoples May Know Him: Seek God's Passion — emphasizes God's people understanding His heart for the lost nations.

The goal for this year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions is \$125 million, every penny of which will go to support missionaries and their ministries. The International Mission Board draws 35% of its income from the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified budget. The Lottie Moon offering provides 49% of income. The remainder is provided by investments and other income.

Vietnam believers counted as few, but bold

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam (BP) — Scarlet coils of incense dangle from the temple ceiling. Acrid smoke wafts from the multitude of candles and incense reverently lit in front of gruesome statues.

the woman exits the temple, she passes between two words etched in towering Chinese characters: faithful and righteous.

More than one million Chinese live in Vietnam. Of those, fewer than 3,000 are

Christian but as Vietnam opens its borders to more tourists, Chinese believers there are gaining boldness and training on how to truly revolutionize their country, says James Lee (not his real name) a leader in one of the Chinese Christian groups in Vietnam.

Although many Chinese in Vietnam converted to Christianity in the late 1970s, according to Lee, fewer Chinese presently are choosing to follow Christ. Vietnam's restrictive policies against the church account for part of the slowdown. Churches are not allowed to evangelize outside of their church buildings, ordain ministers or conduct leadership training, but even regulations cannot stop a movement of God.

Lee's church has joined a growing number of Chinese congregations that are secretly training Christians to lead churches.

Rambunctious children laugh and scream in the street as school classes dismiss. They skip past food vendors hawking their items and clanging rusty bells. Mangy dogs roll and scratch in dusty ditches. Orphans wander from person to person pleading for a morsel of food.

Inside a building, 20 people are earnestly praying for Vietnam. Undisturbed by the din outside, the Christians focus on one thing: learning how to better lead their churches and win the Chinese to Christ.

They know that meeting for such a purpose can bring government reprisals, but they are willing to risk it.

"It's a calling," says Lee. "Once a month we study the Bible for a whole week, from morning to night, but it's forbidden. We must meet quietly."

Boldness is even invigorating church members to share their faith with family and friends. Chang Tuan (not his real name) owns a hardware shop along a bustling commercial street. His wife and children assist the dozens of customers who shop there for nuts and bolts.

Above their heads, written in large gold characters, hang two blazing Bible verses.

"Customers always ask about the Scriptures," Chang says. "It gives us a chance to share about Jesus Christ."

The greatest desire of Lam Mang (not his real name) is to see his older brother accept Jesus Christ as Savior. Lam's parents followed traditional Chinese religion which combines elements of Buddhism with ancestral worship.

Lam Mang is the only Christian witness his family sees. "It's difficult to have a good Christian life among family since they are always looking to me," he says.

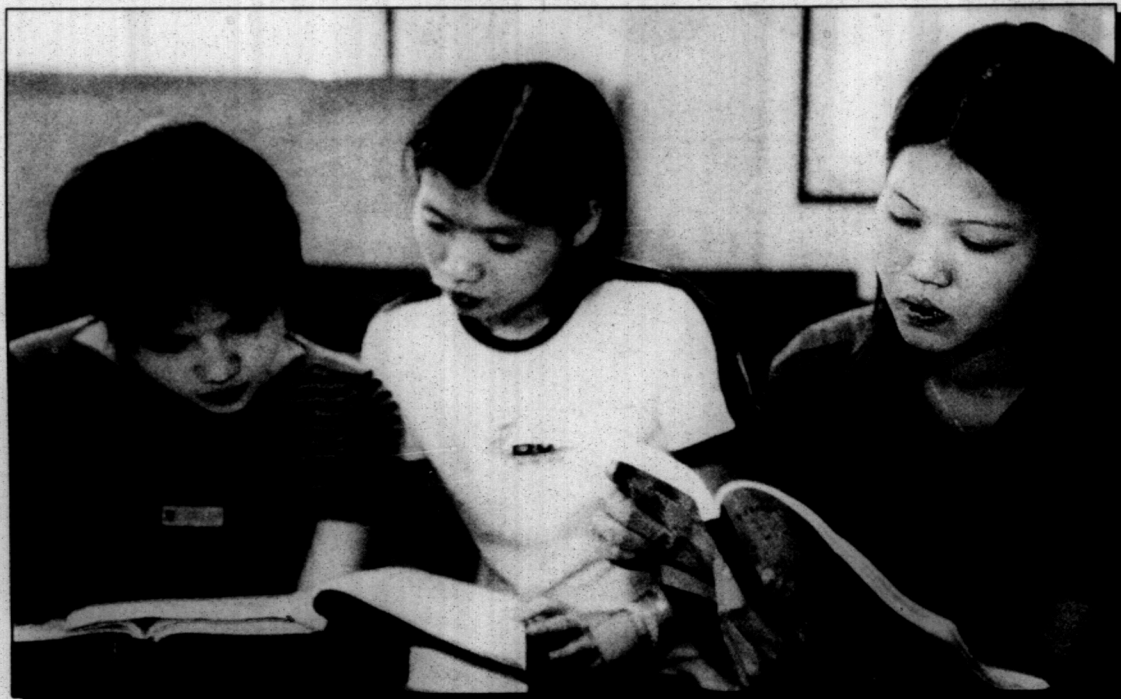
Young people who do choose to follow Christ sometimes encounter resistance from non-Christian family members. A culture of materialism and deep-rooted traditional beliefs keeps Chinese blind from truth.

"It's been difficult to be a Christian; my parents are old-fashioned," says Sharon Young (not her real name), a student in Lee's church.

Young's father disapproves of her faith.

"He says, 'People in the United States trust God and Sept. 11 still happened,'" she says. "He's a businessman -- he's materialistic."

"Many think Christianity is the religion of the West," explains Lee. "They think, 'We are Chinese; we are Buddhist.'"



NO FEAR — The number of Chinese coming to Christ in Vietnam has slowed down during the past 20 years, but younger Chinese Christians may be on the verge of reversing the trend, fearlessly living their faith to win their country for Christ. (BP photo)

In one corner, an elderly Chinese woman holds a bundle of incense sticks and executes a series of snappy bows. She then places her bundle before the idol to Quan Cong, an ancient Chinese general-turned-god. As

the slowdown. Churches are not allowed to evangelize outside of their church buildings, ordain ministers or conduct leadership training, but even regulations cannot stop a movement of God.

International Mission Board of the SBC

Field personnel under appointment
5,364

Field personnel appointed 2001
1,155

Volunteers 2001
33,963

Overseas baptisms 2001
395,773

Overseas churches 2001
61,569

New churches started 2001
5,775

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering 2001
\$113 million

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering 2002 Goal
\$125 million

IMB budget 2002
\$263 million

Missionaries seek to win over Chinese in Paris

PARIS (BP) — It's the lunch hour in Paris, and Jon Norris (not his real name) sits in a Chinese restaurant. Motioning to the Chinese server, Norris speaks to him in Mandarin. This draws a look from the server, who responds in French and calls to another server in Mandarin.

"I love the Chinese, but sometimes it's like looking through a glass bowl to get to them," Norris says.

Such is the daily struggle of Jon and his wife Elizabeth (not her real name), who work among Paris' Chinese people.

For centuries, Paris has been the home of conversation, revolution, inspiration. Its rich history has made it an international center of intellect and independence. Friends debate for hours on subjects ranging from what to serve for dessert to what country is keeping the world from peace.

However, step onto the Metro — the city's subway system — and you'll find life strangely quiet, except for the hum and squeak of the train moving along the tracks. Whereas Parisians talk incessantly with friends, they are slow to open up to strangers.

Chinese culture includes a similar reserve — and Chinese who move to Paris quickly fall into step with Parisian attitudes. So, for Jon and Elizabeth, relationships with Chinese Parisians begin cautiously and

develop slowly. When friendships form, though, they often lead to open doors to Chinese hearts.

Take Paul and Mae Yi Ling (not their real names), for example. Paul works as an engineer in a large corporation; his wife stays at home with their daughters. Ask Paul what he believes in, and he quickly responds, "Myself."

Though the couples have known each other for only two years, Paul calls Jon his "old friend." The Lings understand the Norrises are Christians. The Norrises know the Lings aren't — and they don't hesitate to tell their friends they pray for them.

"I have so much to do in life... I don't think much about another life beyond," says Paul. He admits, "We don't know the way to relate to God."

The Norrises try to help their friends understand Jesus made a relationship with God possible. And sometimes it seems the Lings are beginning to understand.

Each week, Mae Yi tutors Jon in Mandarin. Their sessions often lead to spiritual conversations. When Jon shares words and truths from the Bible, Mae Yi feels a deep peace.

Paul experiences a similar peace when he ventures into Notre Dame, Paris' famous cathedral. "I believe in it," he says, but then he clarifies, "and I don't count too much on it."

Li Juan Lee (not her real

name) grew up with a mindset similar to Paul's. She was born in Asia, where her education repeatedly emphasized that there is no god.

When she moved to Paris, though, a friend took her to a church for university students — at the Norrises' home. She was baptized on her birthday.

The Norrises then discipled Lee and a few other young women who accepted Christ.



ASSIMILATED — French and Chinese cultures mix freely in many parts of Paris. At one Asian-run salon, a Chinese hairdresser — who moved from Vietnam 10 years ago and speaks no Chinese — styles a French woman's hair. Reaching the Chinese who have already assimilated into Parisian life is one of the challenges missionaries encounter. (BP photo)

India residents in desperate search for God |

ANDHRA PRADHESH, India (BP) — An elderly woman pushes her way to the front of the line. She bows her head and murmurs something in Telugu to the Chinese man praying at the front.

She is a devout woman. Evidence of her dedication and devotion, as well as blessing, is symbolized by the red dot on her forehead. She prays and offers sacrifices daily to a wide variety of gods and idols. She even came to tonight's gospel meeting to receive a blessing from the residing priest.

However, this Chinese man is different from the Hindu priests she knows. This man cannot speak her language, yet there is an unexplainable bond. He gently touches the woman's head and prays.

"Father, this woman reminds me of my own family back in Hong Kong -- worshipping anything in search of the one true God," the man says through tears. "Even Hindu followers have come here to ask for blessings from You. This woman doesn't know which god is the true God; she is just fighting for a blessing. Bless her tonight as only You can. Amen."

The woman walks away with a feeling of warmth as the Chinese man leans over to his wife and whispers, "I had no idea it was also like this in other parts of the world," he says about the masses of people without Christ. "I would not have missed this missions trip for the world."

A growing volunteer missions movement among Chinese Christians living in Hong Kong keeps church members busy during their holiday breaks. One Hong Kong Baptist pastor said in the last two years, his church has

sent out more volunteer missionaries than ever before. This year alone, his church sponsored 10 short-term trips to mainland China and Taiwan.

This particular trip is a little different, however. Instead of carrying the gospel message to fellow Chinese, this group of 14 Hong Kong Christians ventured into a third-world community in southern India. Two weeks of playing with 150 children in a children's home, visiting villages and speaking at gospel meetings led to a new awareness in Christ.

"This is so different than other mission trips I have taken. We cannot speak their language here, and the culture is so different," Lisa Tong (not her real name) says. "You have no idea what you are getting yourself into and then it just hits you -- you are here to speak about God's love, and His love just comes shining through."

Tong and her teammates walk daily through the rice paddies on their way to visit the homes of their new Indian friends. They speak of how poor the country is and how they have never seen poverty such as this. At the small, thatch-roofed home, the host family offers a glass of warm water-buffalo milk -- the best drink they can offer. Before the team members leave the home, they pray for the family and share about Christ.

"You would never have this reaction in Hong Kong or China," Tong says. "There is more opportunity to speak the gospel here."

A Southern Baptist worker who arranged the cross-cultural opportunity thinks this exact experience is what will help spread the gospel to "all" nations.

"When you take the gospel to a different culture, it makes

you think more about how to communicate the gospel; it gives you new insights; and you grow in your love for people-all people," he says. "You begin to love and share with people you wouldn't normally share with. That's when you experience God's love in a different way."

Watching the transformation of the team from reserved Chinese to expressive "big brothers and sisters" of the children in the children's home is what cross-cultural missions is all about.

"Chinese culture is so reserved; they are not comfortable with or free to express emotion," the Baptist worker says. "By the end of this trip to India, the team is hugging kids, smiling and walking around holding hands with kids, and they feel comfortable talking to almost anyone."

"When they go back to Hong Kong, those on this team will be more involved in evangelism because of what they've learned here."

Chinese Baptist pastor "Jerry Yau" couldn't agree more. He encourages all of his church members to take a mission trip.

"When Christians get involved in missions and preach the gospel and then come back to our church, they seem to get more involved," Yau says. "They are bolder in their walk. Their heart is stronger for God, and they want to preach the Gospel locally."



MULTI-ETHNIC BAPTIZING — Five nights of evangelical tent meetings end in a celebration of baptism. Pastors from three cultures — Indian, Chinese and American — join in baptizing new believers in the Bay of Bengal. (BP photo)



MAN TO MAN — "John Wang," who works for an insurance company in Hong Kong, hangs out with boys at a children's home in India. (BP photo)



BLESSINGS — Chinese volunteers spent much of their time in India praying for people who approached them on the streets and at evangelical meetings. (BP photo)

Peruvian chifas offer prime opportunities

LIMA, Peru (BP) — Debbie and Wayne Brinkley thought they had a plan. They'd eat in as many Chinese chifas (diners) as they could to learn where the Chinese living in Lima, Peru, gather. When they weren't eating in chifas, they'd drive around Lima, marking locations on a map.

national Mission Board missionaries who recently started focusing on the more than 400,000 Chinese living in Lima. Nearly 100% have no relationship with Jesus Christ.

"We were praying about how to reach the Chinese with the Gospel," Wayne says, "and we had the thought, 'What if there

of socioeconomic level. Most chifas are family owned and operated. Living in an environment that is at the opposite end of the cultural spectrum from their own, Chinese are drawn to the familiarity, solidarity and sense of safety that chifas offer.

Chifas also represent an intricate network of associates closed to outsiders.

"The benefit is that it is a ready network through which the gospel can get out," Wayne says. "The difficult part is getting into the network."

The flow of Chinese arriving in Peru had been constant for more than 100 years until last year's presidential election. Peru had been a transit point for Chinese wanting to immigrate to Canada and the United States. But the current president has made obtaining Peruvian documents more difficult. Still, the Chinese are deeply rooted in Peruvian culture and represent almost half of the 1 million Chinese living in Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia, Argentina and Peru.

That's why the chifas are such a significant ingredient in a church-planting movement. Family is important in Chinese culture and the chifas represent family units. Meals are important in maintaining family connectedness. And chifas allow for families and outsiders — not yet trusted — to come together in a setting where the Chinese are comfortable.

The Brinkleys are now building cultural bridges, finding ways to enter the network. They also are helping a few Chinese Christians develop as leaders. From such humble beginnings, their

expectation is that thousands of Chinese churches will one day be scattered across the five countries. Their confidence comes from what God has already done.

"It has been so obvious that God was working before we accepted the assignment," Wayne says. "We've had so many people and organizations contact us and say that they've been praying for the Chinese in South America and that they feel like God is calling them to be involved."

"That's why now we don't see our role as starting at ground zero but helping to connect all these people God has already called to the task of reaching the Chinese here with the Gospel."

With Peruvian documents more difficult to obtain and a steadily declining economy across South America, many Chinese are returning to China where there is considerably less freedom to share the gospel.

The Brinkleys believe the Chinese living in Western South America could be missionaries to China.

"South America is a window to China," Debbie says. "If the Chinese here understand God's desire for reaching China, they will be able to go places that North American missionaries can't. They are already going back; the problem is that we haven't reached them with the Gospel yet."

The Brinkleys believe the chifas are the key. More Chinese will accept Christ as chifa owners understand God's vision for redeeming the Chinese.

Until they do understand, the Brinkleys plan to hang on to their map.



WORSHIP — Midnight prayer meetings are not unusual in Peruvian Chinese chifas since most Chinese restaurant owners do not close until late. (BP photo)

They ate and marked, and marked some more. They noted more than 100 chifas on a single street alone. Little did they know they'd embarked on an impossible mission. There are almost 6,000 chifas in Lima.

The Brinkleys are Inter-

was a church in every chifa?"

Debbie answers the question. "We could reach everybody. All of the Chinese could have access to the gospel wherever they were in the city."

Chifas are the center of Chinese life in Lima, regardless

Unbeliever has change of heart, professes Jesus

LIMA, Peru (BP) — There is no God, that much he knew. Science proved it — evolution explained the origin of all life and Pedro Xie could site verse and chapter. Teachers drilled it into his mind and soul for years and he had no reason to doubt.

"But Pedro, there is a God and He's alive and He loves you," pleaded his brother time after time by telephone. His brother believed Pedro's eternal destiny was worth the price to call from Minnesota where he lived to where Pedro lived in Peru. Each had gone his own way after leaving China. "He's alive and I've found Him," his brother said.

Eventually a break came in his atheistic resolve. "I remember the moment I questioned myself, 'What if there is a God?'" Pedro says. "It was a major step for me to even open myself to the possibility that there might be a higher Being. It was definitely the Holy Spirit at work in me."

A Peruvian pastor ate often in Pedro's chifa (Chinese diner) and used the opportunities to witness to Pedro. It was during the same time Pedro's brother was imploring Pedro to consider the reality of God.

Pedro was miserable. His spirit was turbulent. He visited the pastor's church but couldn't understand much because everything was spoken in Spanish, a language he was learning. Pedro speaks Cantonese. He flipped through a dictionary groping for understanding as much as he did the Spanish Bible he was given.

The pastor knew of a Mandarin Chinese church in Lima — two hours away by bus. Pedro left his business and went to meet the pastor.

Although the pastor in Lima was of Chinese descent, he spoke no Chinese and preaches through an interpreter. He did, however, give Pedro a Chinese Bible.

It was easier to read, but he still had so many questions. He returned home and went to see the pastor who came to his restaurant. The pastor led him to accept Christ as Savior.

"I did not understand everything he said, but in my heart I knew I needed Jesus," he says. "I asked Him into my heart that day."

So convinced he was that God was real, he immediately told his brother-in-law and his brother-in-law's fiancée.

They attended the Spanish church but Pedro quickly noticed the two nodded their heads politely, but understood nothing. They spoke less Spanish than he did.

He called the pastor in Lima and help came as a Chinese-Argentine missionary. "I knew they needed to hear about God in Cantonese," Pedro says.

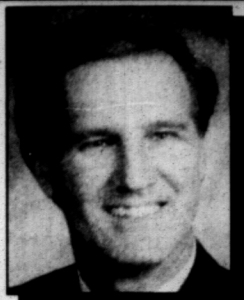
The missionary takes the bus two hours from Lima and leads a two-hour Bible study every Tuesday that begins at midnight, after Pedro closes his chifa.

Difficult? Yes, but Pedro's brother-in-law and fiancée also now know personally that there is a God and that He is real.



CHIFA CHURCH — A mixture of Chinese and Latin belief shows up in this Chinese "chifa" in Lima. The Brinkleys, IMB missionaries, say the Peruvian Chinese feel uncomfortable in a traditional church setting, but could start effective bodies of worship and fellowship in their chifas. (BP photo)

NAMES IN THE NEWS



Von Kanel

Randall Von Kanel has been elected to serve as the Secretary-Treasurer of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Mississippi Alumni Association. He is presently serving as pastor of First Church, Tupelo, and as volunteer president of Global Outreach International in Tupelo.

Fellowship Church, Meridian, recently ordained Adam Herrington, Kevin Thompson, and Andrew Sheffield as deacons. Pictured (from left) are Herrington, Thompson, Sheffield, and Jimmy Williams, pastor.

Poplar Springs Church, Meridian, recently ordained Justin Knight to the ministry. He presently serves as pastor of McCool Church, McCool. Pictured (from left) are Knight and his wife Rachel.

Shivers Church, Shivers, licensed Jason Westmoreland into the ministry on Sept. 29. Pictured (from left) are Westmoreland and Randy Dunn, pastor.

New Home Church, Fulton, licensed brothers Douglas and

Dennis Bridges on Nov. 3. Pictured (from left) are Douglas, Mike Bridges, pastor and father, and Dennis.

Union Church, Beaumont, ordained John Wells, Lamar Breland, and Jeff Windham on Oct. 13. Pictured (from left) are Wells, Breland, Windham, and Wayne Walley, pastor.



Justin and Rachel Knight



Jason Westmoreland and Randy Dunn, pastor



Doug, Mike, and Dennis Bridges



Deacons of Fellowship Church, Meridian



Deacons of Union Church, Beaumont

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1. Lord, I admit that I need you. *(I have sinned.)*
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. *(I repent.)*
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. *(I believe in Jesus.)*
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him. *(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)*

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Calvin Miller: Use less brains, more 'minds'

SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP) — Oklahoma Baptist University alum Calvin Miller told the university's homecoming chapel crowd that brains alone don't really count for much. It's minds that matter.

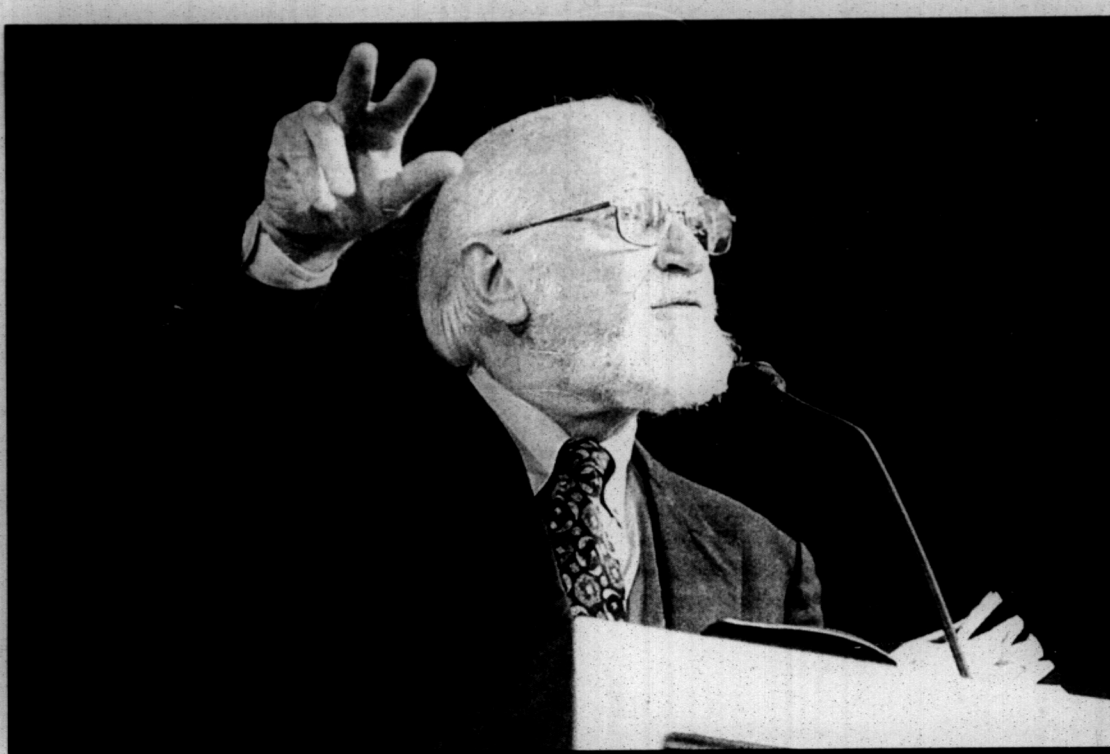
The distinction between the mind and the brain is what Christian education is all about, said the well-known author and professor of pastoral studies at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham.

"I believe that minds and brains are not the same thing," Miller said. "The brain is merely the vehicle and the mind is the driver."

"I believe it's the job of Christian education to put a mind in every human brain. I'm a believer in Christian education."

Examining a version of Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," Miller said in his Nov. 9 message that God wants people to see the world as he sees it — though it is a vision in a world filled with paradoxes.

"When we think about the diversity in our culture, you could easily rearrange Dickens to say, 'It was a time for



BOOSTING CHRISTIAN MIND — Calvin Miller tells alumni and students at Oklahoma Baptist University's homecoming chapel, "When you put a Christian mind in the most ordinary of brains, some wonderful things happen." (BP photo)

humanism, our time. It was a time for inhumanity," Miller said. "It was the epic of Microsoft, it was the age of illiteracy. It was a day of unisex and a day of megasex."

The characteristics of today's culture, he noted, result in humans not ever developing or using their mind power.

"We've sunk a long ways," he said. "It's kind of a dumb-down age. It's a very plastic world out

there, and as we continue to dumb down, and dumb down, and dumb down, it will become more plastic. We are effectively amusing ourselves to death."

God wants the same thing that Christian colleges want: to put a mind in every brain, Miller said.

"The great glory of Christian colleges is not just trigonometry or algebra," he said. "The best part of the Christian mind is

we're inhabited by a worldview given to us by a Savior who has moved inside of us."

He noted that in Philippians 2:8 the focus of "Jesus became obedient" should not be on the word "obedient" but on the word "became." The emphasis should be on the process.

When Jesus was born, Miller said, he did not announce who he was to his mother. He did what other babies do.

"He was in the process of finding out who he was," he said. "That's the process of building the great mind, of putting the mind in every brain."

"The process of becoming means that all our lives, we're going to learn more and more, hopefully in places like [OBU], which hopefully will stand out like a star in a dumb-down

world around it," he said. "When you put a Christian mind in the most ordinary of brains, some wonderful things happen."

"We march on a great plastic world with the mystery of godliness. And we love that world in the name of Jesus."

Miller, a 1958 graduate of the university, has completed more than 40 works since his first book, "The Singer Trilogy," was published in 1975.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

Reprimand over Bibles draws ire of Fla. paper

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP) — A Jacksonville, Fla., school bus driver was given a letter of discipline for distributing Bibles to students on her bus, prompting the daily newspaper here to address what it called a "Biblephobia boom."

After picking students up Nov. 19 from Merrill Road Elementary School in

Jacksonville, the driver pulled out of the school driveway and stopped at the corner. A man approached the bus and through a window handed the driver Bibles to be distributed to students.

Merrill Road Elementary School Principal Sonita Young said the Bibles were given by a man from The Gideons

International, a group that distributes 56 million Bibles worldwide each year.

A school representative said the driver thought the man was with the school and accepted the books. Students sitting near the driver said they wanted the Bibles and she gave them out, Donna Alosa, a regional manager for the bus company, said.

"It all happened so fast that she didn't pay attention to what she was giving out and that was wrong," said Marsha Oliver in an interview with the Associated Press.

Jerry Burden, executive director of Gideons International in Nashville, Tenn., told WJXT television that the organization does not condone handing out Bibles on a public school bus.

Alosa said a letter condemning the incident was placed in the driver's file and no other disciplinary actions would be taken.

Jacksonville's Florida Times-Union newspaper, in its Sunday editorial, condemned the disciplinary action, noting that "political correctness not only is alive and well, it's thriving on Florida's First Coast."

"It turned out that he was with Gideons International, and the books were Bibles, which some seem to think are on a par with anthrax," the editorial stated.

"One certainly doesn't force something on other people by giving them books that they requested. The mystery is why her actions were wrong."

"Young people need to read more," the editorial continued. "If parents thought it would harm their offspring to read the Bible, that's a decision they should make themselves. A school bus driver shouldn't be expected to make it for them."

THANKS TO LUNCEFORD

Editor:

I wanted to make you and your readers aware of some extraordinary service rendered to friends of mine by Lloyd Lunceford, director of the Baptist Student Union (BSU) at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) in Hattiesburg.

These friends were returning to Fayetteville, Ark., from a military reunion on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. They had a rather serious accident in Hattiesburg and the lady suffered serious injuries.

I knew no one in Hattiesburg but as the former BSU director here at the University of Arkansas, I knew something of the BSU ministry at USM. I called Lloyd and his response was immediate.

If anyone ever went the second mile in Christian service, it was Lloyd. According to my friends, here are some of the things Lloyd did:

- made repeated visits to the hospital.
- gave them a telephone calling card for long distance.
- provided transportation for the lady's husband and daughter.
- took care of laundry for her husband.

I visited the couple at our rehab hospital last weekend. They could not say enough in praise of Lloyd. Both of them couldn't help but become emotional when speaking of him.

I just thought that your readers should know of the ministry of one of your convention's workers.

Jamie L. Jones
Fayetteville, Ark.

DON'T USURP

Editor:

In the beginning God did create the first Adam — before He created Adam's helpmate, the first woman.

The second Adam had to be born of a virgin that He might bear the sin of all men and women.

The 'modeling-clay Jesus' put forth by the writer of the letter could not have been Messiah for any of us.

The only ones who are preempting the authority of God are the women themselves who have traded the truth for a lie, believing the voice of secular feminism over the voice of their Holy God.

Carol McPhearson
Redwood

Miss. Baptist schools ranked in U.S. News

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Forty-five members of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools (ASBCS) have been listed among the nation's best in the 2003 annual survey by U.S. News & World Report, including Mississippi Baptists' Mississippi College in Clinton, Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain, and William Carey College in Hattiesburg.

U.S. News & World Report studied more than 1,400 institutions scattered across the United States, gathering data from the schools themselves and soliciting opinions from peer institutions on their perception of quality.

The rankings are determined by analyzing data gathered in seven categories of information: peer assessment; graduation and retention rates; faculty resources; student selectivity; financial resources; and alumni giving.

For schools evaluated in the national universities-doctoral and liberal arts colleges-bachelor's categories, the ranking system also analyzes data on "graduation rate performance." In addition to the overall ranking, the magazine developed additional comparisons on topics of lowest acceptance rate, highest graduation rate, and highest proportion of classes under 20.

The eight ASBCS member schools ranked in the top tier were listed in Best Universities-Master's and in Best Comprehensive Colleges - Bachelor's. Samford University

(fifth), Mercer University (tied for eighth), Belmont University (tied for 15th), and Union University (33rd) were ranked in the top tier

of Best Universities - Master's in the South.

The Best Universities - Master's category looked at 572 schools that they determined fit into this group. Samford also was ranked sixth among all the Best Universities - Master's institutions in the listing of schools

with the highest graduation rate. These schools are those that provide a full range of undergraduate and master's-level programs but offer few if any doctoral programs.

Among institutions ranked in the category Best Comprehensive Colleges - Bachelor's, four ASBCS member schools made the top tier. Oklahoma Baptist University (second in the West), Ouachita Baptist University (fourth in the South), Shorter College (tied for 17th in the South) and Louisiana College (tied for 20th in the South) were listed among the best in this category.

Oklahoma Baptist University also was ranked second in the listing of schools with the highest graduation rate among the Best Comprehensive Colleges - Bachelor's. The category includes 324 institutions that were evaluated by U.S. News and includes those schools that offer a wide range of undergraduate degrees in liberal arts and

professional disciplines.

Baylor University was listed in the second tier of Best National Universities - Doctoral category. The maga-

zine evaluated 249 institutions that fit the profile to be listed based on the fact that these schools offered a "wide range of undergraduate majors as well as master's and doctoral programs." The group included 162 public institutions and 87 privates.

Other schools ranked in the second tier in their respective categories included 13 ASBCS member schools. Among the Best Universities - Master's; Campbell University, Carson-Newman College, Cumberland

Comprehensive Colleges - Bachelor's, five member schools were ranked in the second tier: Blue Mountain College and Virginia Intermont

from the South; Judson College (Illinois) from the Midwest; and East Texas Baptist University and Howard Payne University from the West.

Sixteen ASBCS schools were ranked in the third tier of their respective categories:

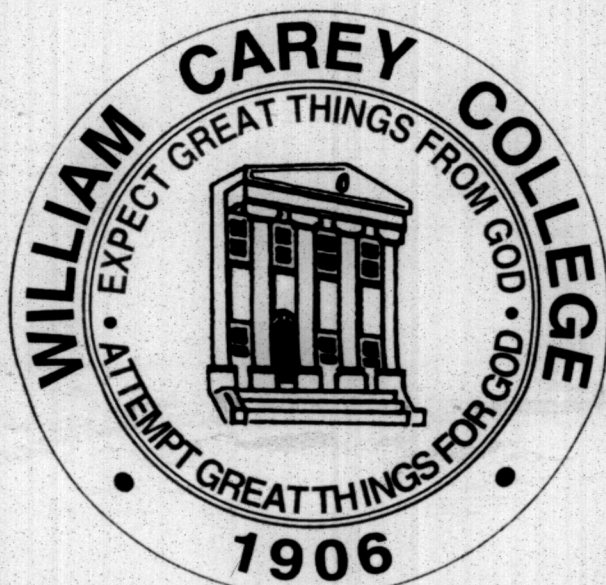
Georgetown College and William Jewell College among the Best Liberal Arts Colleges - Bachelor's; Averett University, Campbellsville University, Charleston Southern University, Gardner-Webb University, Palm Beach Atlantic University, William Carey College, California Baptist University, Dallas Baptist University, and Houston Baptist University among the Best Universities - Master's; Anderson College, Bluefield College, Chowan College, North Greenville College, and Hannibal LaGrange College among the Best Comprehensive Colleges - Bachelor's.

Eight ASBCS member schools were ranked in the fourth tier of their respective categories: Judson College (Alabama) among the Best Liberal Arts Colleges - Bachelor's; University of Mobile, Southwest Baptist

University and Wayland Baptist University among the Best Universities - Master's; Brewton-Parker College, Mid-Continent College, Missouri Baptist University, and Williams Baptist College among Best Comprehensive Colleges - Bachelor's.

College, and Mississippi College were listed among the schools in the South. Grand Canyon University, Hardin-Simmons University, and the University of Mary Hardin Baylor were listed among the schools located in the West.

Within the category of Best



New writers announced for next quarter

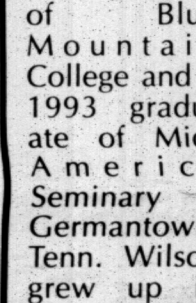
Shirley Stough is a retired public school teacher. She is a member of First Church,



Stough

Picayune, where she teaches an adult ladies' Sunday School class. She serves on the local library board and is a city election commissioner. She is an officer in Pearl River County Retired Teachers Unit, Civic Woman's Club, and Alpha Delta Kappa. Her hobbies include watercolor painting and reading.

Don Wilson is pastor of Pleasant Ridge Church, Union County. He is a 1983 graduate of Blue



Wilson

Mountain College and a 1993 graduate of Mid-America Seminary in Germantown, Tenn. Wilson grew up in Corinth and has pastored four other churches in north-east Mississippi over the last 19 years. He is married to Lisa McCoy-Wilson of Corinth, and has three children: Wesley, Jennifer, and Elizabeth.

MS POSITIONS AVAILABLE

STUDENT MINISTER SOUGHT BY church averaging 154 in Sunday School/70 in Discipleship Training. Mail to Longview Baptist, c/o Johnny Sykes, 406 Dozier Hill Rd., Belden, MS 38826. Church located 6 miles east of Pontotoc, MS/10 miles west of Tupelo, MS.

BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER sought by church averaging 185 in Sunday School. Mail resume to Corinth Baptist Church, 207 Church Road, Magee, MS 39111 by December 9, 2002.

SEEKING TO FILL NEW POSITION: Children's Director, Immanuel Baptist Church, 6949 Hwy 61 South, Vicksburg, MS 39180, contact person: Donnie Tedford at (601) 636-0482.

ADATON BAPTIST CHURCH, Starkville, Miss., seeks full-time Director of Children's Ministry for nursery through sixth grade children. Seminary training and/or related experience or education preferred. Send resume to Adaton Baptist Church, ATTN: DOCM Search Chairman, 1975 Highway 82 West, Starkville, MS 39759.

LAKE HARBOR BAPTIST CHURCH,

twenty miles north of Jackson seeks a Bi-vocational Minister of Music. Detailed responsibilities upon request. Send resumes or letters of interest to Lake Harbor Baptist Church, 3973 Hwy 43 North, Brandon, MS 39047.

THE TRI-COUNTY IS SEEKING AN Associate Associational Missions Director to assist in missions involvement and education. Resumes may be sent to Tri-County Baptist Missions, P.O. Box 350, Columbia, MS 39429. Resumes will be received until December 31, 2002.

ADATON BAPTIST CHURCH, Starkville, Miss. is seeking an individual for full-time Music Minister position. Please contact the church at (662) 323-3735 for more information. Send resume to ABC, 1975 Hwy. 82 West, Starkville, MS 39759.

SANDERSVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH IS seeking a part-time Youth Minister. If interested, please submit your resume to Sandersville Baptist Church, in care of Darnyle Sanders at P. O. Box 440, Sandersville, MS 39477.

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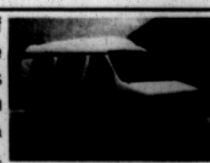
A QUEEN MATTRESS SET, PILLOW-top NEW in plastic, sell \$175.00, call (601) 209-0872.

A BRAND NEW KING ORTHOPEDIC mattress set, NEW in plastic, ONLY \$189.00, call (601) 209-0872.

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Preparing the Way

Luke 1:5-7; 1:15; 18-20; 68-69; 76-79

By Shirley Stough

'Tis the season to retrieve Christmas decorations from the attic, to search the files for family-favorite recipes, and to complete the gift lists. These activities merely herald the beginning of much more preparation for the Christmas celebration. Many Christians get caught up in the prevalent worldview of the Christmas season - catering to materialistic and social impulses thus missing the opportunities of worship and service. As you approach this Christmas season, how will you prepare the way for Christ to be the center of your Christmas? How will you prepare the way for others to accept the Messiah?

Luke 1 illustrates how God prepared for the coming of the Messiah through the miraculous birth of John the Baptist. Later, John would prepare the

people for the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah, Jesus.

The events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist are quite unusual. However, Luke establishes the truth of these events by giving historical background. The events occurred during the reign of Herod in Judea. Luke also shows that these events are fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachi 4:5: "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord" (NASV). John the Baptist is the "Elijah" referred to in Luke 1:17: "And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah... so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (NASV).

Zachariah and Elizabeth play a supporting role in preparing the way for others to accept Jesus. They are examples of people who



Stough

meet God's expectations consistently. Both Zachariah and Elizabeth were from priestly backgrounds, but they were not prominent. They exhibited strong moral character. However, their lives were not free from pain and disappointment. They were aged and childless. Many considered being childless a sign

of God's disfavor. Since Zachariah and Elizabeth were righteous people, they likely expected God to grant their request. Zachariah and Elizabeth probably wondered why God had not answered their prayers for a child. Despite their unanswered questions, their hopelessness, and the slight of others, they continued to trust God and to be obedient to Him. Their relationship with God continued to grow.

The high point of Zachariah's life as a priest was to be chosen to offer incense in the temple. This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. God used this special time to send an angel with a message for Zachariah. Although the angel's appearance was a startling experience, the message

was equally shocking. The angel said that Elizabeth would conceive and bear a son to be named John. The message was so unbelievable that Zachariah doubted God would answer this particular prayer. Like Zachariah who prayed consistently, Christians proclaim the power of prayer but are amazed when God answers their prayers. Zachariah's doubts prompted him to ask for a sign that God had sent the message. God gave him a sign in the form of punishment for his doubt. The sign was that he could not speak until the birth of John. His inability to speak was evidence that God had answered his prayers for a son. Like Zachariah, people of strong faith sometimes question God and even stumble into momentary doubt. Also like Zachariah, believers can move from doubt to stronger faith. Zachariah's experience shows us that God hears persistent prayers. He does not always answer in the way we would like. He answers in His own way in His own time.

Elizabeth's conception was further proof that God's promise was true. When the child was

born, Elizabeth named him John (as God had commanded) to the surprise of friends and neighbors. Upon their questioning the name, Zachariah wrote, "His name is John." Immediately Zachariah's speech was restored. The Holy Spirit gave Zachariah insight into the future accomplishments of Jesus and John the Baptist. Zachariah praised God who empowered him to prophesy about Jesus and John. Zachariah praised God for sending Jesus to redeem His people and John to prepare the way for the Redeemer.

Zachariah and Elizabeth thought their opportunity to have a son was past, yet they remained faithful and obedient to God. They continued to pray. In God's time, He answered their prayers and used this humble couple to play a supporting role in God's redemptive plan. A view of this couple's lives helps answer the question "What kind of person can God use to prepare the way to Jesus?" He can use dedicated, spirit-filled people of prayer.

Stough is a member of First Church, Picayune.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

A Serving Life

John 13:1-5, 12-18, 34-35

By Don Wilson

Employers often say, "Good help is hard to find." Yet the best perspective when it comes to understanding what service is all about is that of Jesus Himself. His teaching, as well as His actions, shows what genuine service is like. His service is done correctly and with motives properly lined up. John 13 provides a glimpse into the heart of Jesus and the heart of service. Up to this point, the Gospel of John has focused on Jesus' actions, words, and the reactions of those who saw and heard. However, this unit of study (John 13:1-16:4) is centered on a direct message from Jesus to his close followers. No one needed these words any more than that group—that is, unless it is I.

HUMILITY (John 13:1-5).

Passover was fast approaching. It was a Jewish feast filled with meaningful opportunities to remember how God in the distant past had delivered Israel from a time of bitter bondage. Jesus had gathered His special group of followers around Him because He really knew what was going on around Him. These guys still did not understand, but Jesus did. First, He knew what time it was. According to John 13:1, "He knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father." This echoes the thought of John 12:23. The time had come for Jesus to return to His Father. It was time for the plan of redemption to be fully



Wilson

implemented. Returning to the Father required Jesus' sacrifice of Himself. His love for these disciples drove Him from the feast to His knees, from His knees to the tree—the cross, from the tree to tomb, and from the tomb to the throne. His love would last forever, even to the very end.

Jesus also knew who His enemy was. The devil was already at work to stop Jesus. He had already tried to work through the religious leaders. Now he was attempting to ruin God's redemptive plan by infiltrating Jesus' inner circle of followers. However, Jesus already knew who the enemy agent was (13:11). Notice how the devil got to Judas. He had planted the information in his heart. It was a notion or impulse that suddenly came over Judas. He could not overcome it (not that he wanted to) and eventually did exactly what Satan told him to do. Sometimes a notion is all it

takes for us to swallow his lie and fall into sin.

Jesus also knew that God had already placed in His hands all the necessary tools to accomplish his work. He knew who He was—God Himself in human flesh. He knew He came from God and was on His way back home, but knowing all that did not generate pride and a superiority complex. Instead, a spirit of humility was prompted. Jesus responded to all that He knew by taking the menial position of a slave and by washing the feet of His disciples.

ACTION (John 13:12-18). The action Jesus took spoke louder than words, but certainly His words helped them and us understand. He had previously taught these same guys about the need to be servants (Mark 10:42-45), but it had not yet stuck. Now this act of humility demonstrated what He meant. The lesson was not given so the church could institute a foot-washing service; it was an example of humility. The

need of the hour was clean feet, so feet were washed. The need of our hours will likely be something else, but our response should always be a humility that reaches out to meet to that need. Philippians 2:5-8 sums it up well: "...He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." The need of the hour was a sacrifice; His humility met the need.

LOVE (John 13:34-35). The first verse of John 13 speaks of Jesus' love for His followers that lasted to the very end. Now He exhorts them to have that same kind of unselfish love. That love is only possible in those who have come into relationship with God through Jesus. It is that powerful, militant love of God that provides the ability to love. It is that same love that marks you as a disciple of Jesus and convinces the world of that fact.

Wilson is pastor of Pleasant Ridge Church, Dumas.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attach-



ments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the **who, what, when, where** details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

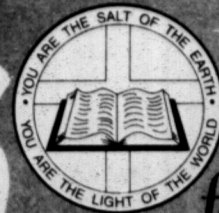
Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES



for Christian Living

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Victoria Doesn't Have A Secret Any More

By Lee Yancey

Romans 1:22-25 says, "Professing to be wise they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature, rather than the Creator."



Yancey

Nudity, throughout the ages, has been an object of worship. The naked human body fascinates people. Sex, or the idea of sex, is used to sell clothes, cars, or colas and it is working. On Wednesday, November 20th, 2002, CBS aired the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show during prime time. Models clad in leather panties, satin thongs, and angel's wings paraded down the runway under the lustful scrutiny of millions. Companies like Victoria's Secret and Abercrombie and Fitch provide soft-core pornographic magazines that are masqueraded as fashion. CBS used nearly naked supermodels to attract a younger audience. Lusting for a bigger share of the ratings, the network offered its version of the bare essentials to the wide-eyed viewers across the world. Last year, ABC carried the program despite hundreds of e-mail complaints for about 12.4 million viewers. Promoted as "the

Sexiest Night on Television," the 2002 version featured skimpy clothing items that are not even available in stores. I've always heard that if it's not for sale, then don't advertise it. The fact is that money talks and when millions of viewers tune in, CBS and

Victoria's Secret feel justified in their bawdy presentation. Sure, a few e-mails will be sent and there will be some Christians against them, but in the long run, their business booms. Perhaps Victoria's Secret is crying all the way to the bank. If you would like to take a stand against what CBS

and Victoria's Secret have done you can file a formal complaint with the FCC by going to <http://www.afa.net/activism/FCCComplaint.asp> and downloading the formal complaint. Fill it out and mail it to FCC Commissioner Michael K. Powell

lege of their broadcast license. Should we say something or do nothing?

Abercrombie and Fitch (A&F) publishes a catalogue of its clothing lines several times each year. Teenagers appear nude and in provocative poses that depict homosexual and heterosexual behavior. Young teens are the intended target of these catalogues. Among Christian youth, it is not uncommon to see t-shirts or caps with the Abercrombie and Fitch name or logo. Wearing the symbols of hedonism is "in" at our junior high and senior high schools. I



and ask him to become personally involved. CBS has violated the public trust and abused the privi-

have seen elementary school age children wearing A & F clothing without knowing what it represents. Until recently, A & F carried a thong panty for girls ages 10 to 14. Younger girls could wear the smallest size. On the front of the panty in a heart logo were the words "eye candy." Another version has "wink wink" on the front. A & F spokesperson Hampton Carney says: "It's cute and fun and sweet," adding that "it's not appropriate for a seven-year-old, but it is appropriate for a 10-year-old. Once you get about 10, you start to care about your underwear, and you start to care about your clothes." Well, I'm not buying it. As much of a problem as our country has had with pedophilia, it is incredible that A & F would introduce



a kiddie thong! The evidence of such perversity indicates clearly that A & F has little regard for the innocence of little girls. Because of a tremendous outcry from Christians, the kiddie thong is no longer available. In the summer catalogue labeled "XXX," the first 119 pages are filled with full color photos of nude teenagers having a jolly old time on the beach, in the water, and the backyard. One might expect to see this type of material in a pornographic magazine, but not in an apparel catalogue whose target audience is teenagers. What can we do about this? First, stop shopping at Abercrombie & Fitch and stop wearing their logos. What a statement it would make if all Mississippi Baptist teenagers would boycott A & F publicly. Another way to fight them is sign a petition with the American Decency Association. Their web address is: <http://www.americandecency.org/abercrombie.htm>. Also contact Michael Jeffries, president of Abercrombie and Fitch and tell him what you think. His contact information is: 6301 Fitch Path, New Albany, Ohio 43054. Phone: 614-283-6500. E-mail: <http://www.abercrombie.com>

Recently, on Lakeland Drive in Jackson, a billboard was rented by "People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals" (PETA). I see it on my way home everyday. There in all his manliness is Fabio and beside him are the words, "Want to Cheat on Your Husband?" and a phone number, 919-NEW-MEAT. If you call the number, you will find out that PETA is suggesting that a wife

substitute tofu or another non-meat product for meat when preparing dinner. In a sense, the wife would be cheating her husband out of eating meat. The controversial ad is just another example of how illicit sex is used to sell an idea or a product. Occasionally, women will bare it all saying they would rather be naked than wear fur. Accordingly, they are led away by the police for indecent exposure. Cameras flash, videotapes roll, and PETA gets the press they so desperately crave.

The influence of the media continues to dominate our society. Sex is its number one vehicle and if we are all not careful, will destroy our great nation. The line of decency gets redrawn every year and pretty soon nothing will be out of bounds. Victoria's Secret models walk in front of millions modeling the perfect bodies and the "appropriate" lingerie to adorn it. The truth is that for most women, having a body like a supermodel is unattainable and creates an unreal expectancy. Teenage girls starve themselves to death trying to be the "right" size. Many girls are really sick, mentally and physically due to the expectation of being thin. Men who watch supermodels careening mostly naked on a runway take one more step toward seeing women as objects for sexual pleasure rather than caring people who are dear to our Heavenly Father. We face a serious problem today in that once again, many are worshiping the created being rather than the One who Created us all.



State conventions hold annual meetings

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Even in states where prolonged debate had occurred in recent years, Southern Baptists experienced harmonious state convention annual meetings this year, most of which were held in October and November.

About a fourth of the state or regional conventions adopted a resolution or embraced as a convention theme the Southern Baptist Convention-wide emphasis on Empowering Kingdom Growth and its call for Baptists to place priority on the Kingdom of God in their lives and churches. Several states like South Carolina — where the concept was pioneered — will utilize the principles of EKG to seek spiritual awakening.

Two state conventions — Arkansas and Louisiana — accepted the Baptist Faith and Message statement adopted by SBC messengers in 2000 as a means of providing doctrinal guidelines for their work. In California, an effort to remove the previously accepted BF&M was strongly defeated. Messengers to the Baptist General Convention of Texas once again rejected a member's attempt to make the BF&M 2000 a guiding theological statement with some opponents describing the document as heretical.

Most conventions adopted budgets that are larger than the current year's receipts, with the portion of church contributions forwarded to the SBC for worldwide missions and ministry ranging from 14 to 52 percent, depending on the state or region. Following is a brief summary of actions in each state or regional convention or fellowship. Baptist Press is awaiting reports from the remaining conventions.

ALABAMA

Messengers to the Alabama convention adopted a base budget of \$40,427,480 and challenge budget of \$41,427,480, both reflecting a 3 percent increase from 2002. Cooperative Program receipts for 2003 will continue to be distributed 57.7 percent to Alabama convention causes and 42.3 percent to Southern Baptist Convention causes. Joe Godfrey, pastor of Taylor Road Baptist Church in Montgomery, was elected convention president. Among 11 resolutions were appreciation for the life of the late W.A. Criswell and the Alabama legislature's passage of the Woman's Right To Know Act; opposition to gambling, especially state-run lotteries; and a call for removing "language demeaning to racial minorities" from Alabama's laws and public documents.

ALASKA

The Alaska Baptist Convention passed a \$1.9 million budget, forwarding 33 percent of CP gifts to SBC missions and ministries; approved a resolution supporting Empowering Kingdom Growth; and elected Leon May of Anchorage as president. Executive Director David Baldwin outlined a "Light Up Alaska" vision focusing on missions, prayer, church development and evangelism, countering a decline in membership and baptisms in the state.

ARIZONA

Messengers to the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention elected John Elder of Green Valley as president and referred to committee a motion seeking more time for consideration of candidates. Messengers adopted a flat \$3,261,130 budget, sending 25 percent to SBC causes. Among eight resolutions were praise for entities assisting in renovation of facilities used by ASBC and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary and a commitment to pray for the country and unity within ABSC. Constitutional revisions were adopted to address changes made in a recent reorganization.



MORE THAN A MEETING — With evangelism a key theme in most state conventions, volunteers in Williamsburg, Ky., unite in prayer at the county courthouse as part of a Cross Over Kentucky evangelistic outreach prior to the state convention's Nov. 12-13 annual meeting at Cumberland College there. (BP photo by Robert Reeves)

million budget was approved, forwarding 41.77 percent to SBC causes, and a partnership with Sao Paulo, Brazil, was extended for three more years. Resolutions opposed gambling, encouraged programs and services to children at risk and called for unity.

CALIFORNIA

Messengers to the California Southern Baptist Convention declined an effort to remove "Southern" from their name. An estimated 80 percent defeated a

Sheets of Byers was re-elected president and a two-year partnership with Belarus was approved. Resolutions congratulated the Montana Baptist Fellowship on its vote to seek convention status and thanked the International Mission Board and Hungarian Baptist Union for a recent partnership.

D.C. BAPTIST CONVENTION

The District of Columbia Baptist Convention elected Charles Updike of Gaithersburg as president. Next year's budget will be approved next spring as the convention completes a re-visioning process. Of Cooperative Program gifts received from churches, BCMD forwards 35 percent for distribution worldwide. Bylaw changes eliminated one committee and added flexibility to scheduling the annual meeting.

FLORIDA

Messengers to the Florida Baptist State Convention elected Tommy Green of Tampa as president. A \$35.2 million budget was approved, forwarding 40 percent to SBC missions and ministries. Messengers also approved a constitutional amendment to allow the convention president a second one-year term.

GEORGIA

The Georgia Baptist Convention adopted a \$50 million budget, forwarding 43.75 percent to SBC causes. Wayne Robertson of Valdosta was re-elected president. The ongoing dispute between the convention and Shorter College trustees was referred to the convention's executive committee.

COLORADO

Messengers to the Colorado Baptist General Convention approved a 2003 budget of more than \$3.6 million dollars, forwarding 29 percent of CP receipts to SBC causes. Jim

ARKANSAS

Messengers overwhelmingly approved a second reading of a change to the convention's articles of incorporation, making the BF&M the doctrinal guideline for Arkansas Baptists. The measure passed by 75.77 percent, up from the 69.5 percent last year. Re-elected convention President Jim Lagrone of Bryant assured the 283 messengers opposing the BF&M measure of their "seat at the Baptist table in Arkansas." A \$19.5



BETWEEN SESSIONS — Bill Hardin (left), first vice-president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and pastor of First Church, Picayune, visits with Mark Vincent (center), pastor of First Church, Charleston, and his wife Janine during a break at the 2002 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. The annual meeting was held October 29-30 at First Church, Jackson. (BR photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

motion to remove the BF&M from the convention's statement of cooperation. Wayne Stockstill of Heisera was elected president. A \$17.1 million budget was approved, forwarding 30 percent to SBC missions and ministries.

Bibliocipher

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LSFRP NB FPBKBUKB,
SAT WKSND SOLSND,
FPSF NB GSN EB
SRRIMAFBT LIKFPN
FI BDRSWB SOO
FPBDB FPZAVD FPSF
DPSOO RIGB FI WSDD,
SAT FI DFSAT EBUKB
FPB DIA IU GSA.

OMCB FLBAFN-IAB:

FPZKFN-DZJ

Clue: F=T

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Acts Twelve:Five